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AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD

BY WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON

ROUNDLY denounced by both parties to the controversy, and in some details extravagant in expression, the Attorney-General's opinion in the matter of applying the prohibition enforcement act to merchant vessels stands in the main approved by international law as well as by American law and practice. The Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act being what they are, their provisions must apply to ships within our territorial waters precisely the same as to hotels or other buildings on our land. They must also apply to foreign vessels in our waters just as they do to alien persons domiciled temporarily in this country; there being no principle of international law more consistently maintained by our Government than that. They apply to American vessels when on the high seas as much as when in our coast waters, because the jurisdiction of a government accompanies its ships on the high seas wherever they may go. Conversely, of course, they cannot possibly apply to foreign vessels outside the three mile limit,—despite the impudent pretension which some tried to make to the contrary,—because on the high seas those vessels—like our own—are solely under the jurisdiction of their respective governments. Note, too, that just as we can forbid foreign vessels to carry alcoholic beverages in our waters, so a foreign country can, if it pleases, enforce any of its laws upon our shipping in its ports. Thus, certain European countries require ships under their flags to supply their crews with vinous beverages; and they could require our vessels to do the same when in their waters. The possibilities of embarrassing international complications under a logical application of the existing law are almost unlimited, and afford an impressive object lesson in the evils of ill-considered, slapdash legislation, producing results which no sane man intended or desired.

Apart from the disinterested neighborly interest—if I may perpetrate the paradox—which Americans naturally feel in the character and doings of the British Government, two features of the recent Ministerial crisis and appeal to the country especially command attention. One is the gratifying circumstance that the change of government did not in any respect impair the cordial relations between the United Kingdom and the United States; and indeed that no conceivable further change would be likely to do so. Memory has to reach far back to find a time when friendliness or unfriendliness toward America was a party issue in British politics, and the return of such a time has no place in future anticipations. The other feature is the extraordinary flexibility of the British system and its quick response to popular sentiment, as contrasted with ours. No matter how much our Executive may lose the confidence of Congress and of the country, it is immovable until four years have elapsed; while in Great Britain it may be turned out and replaced by another in an hour. Moreover, when we elect a new Congress, it is ordinarily thirteen months, and at earliest four months, before it can begin the work for which it is summoned; while in Great Britain a new House of Commons may be at work within a week after its election. Each system has its advantages, and each its disadvantages; and it may be that each has something of profit to learn from the other.

The strenuous doings of the Fascisti in Italy must be deplored in so far as they exalt violence or menace of violence above legal and constitutional methods; which is, of course, something equally to be said of any other political or social agitation. Within proper limits, however, the movement may be regarded with equanimity, if not with actual sympathy. It is passing strange that people generally concede the entire propriety of Radical agitation and propaganda, even though they may not agree with it, and protest against any repression of it as tyranny; while upon any Conservative movement they look askant and are inclined to condemn it as a disgraceful thing. "Clear your mind of cant." One man has as good a right to be a Conservative as another has to be a Radical. The Fascisti have as good a right to organize, to conduct propaganda, and to gain control of the Government of

Italy, as have the Socialists and Bolshevists whom they oppose. So far as Americans know of them, their chief objects appear to be to develop nationality and to promote conservative but constructive government instead of the radical destructiveness for which the Socialists were lately clamoring. If that be a fair estimate of them, their dominance in Italian politics may be of great good.

Nothing could be said that would be more pertinent to the centenary of Louis Pasteur, or more accurately descriptive of the essential qualities of that illustrious man, than what, writing on an entirely different subject, Professor Vernon Kellogg says in another part of this REVIEW; to wit, that if one is not a man of vision "he will never be a great scientist", and again: "Ideal in aim, but realist in method." Pasteur was supremely, perhaps above all other scientists of his age, a man of vision; his opponents called him visionary, an impractical dreamer of impossible dreams; and not in spite of that fact but, as Professor Kellogg suggests, because of it, or at least in accord with it, he became indisputably one of the very greatest scientists of the nineteenth century. It might not be extravagant to reckon him the greatest of all, because his achievements had to do with the science of human life, which we must surely esteem the highest of all sciences. It would be difficult to imagine a man more ideal in aim than he; aiming at the elimination of all zymotic and probably all communicable diseases of any kind from the world. It would be not merely difficult but impossible for anybody to be more realist in method. His conceptions were like those of a spiritual creator; his working out of them vied in practicality and thoroughness with the inexorable processes of nature. In one supreme respect his work was—I write with all possible reverence—like unto that of the Creator of the universe; namely, its unity or at least harmony of design. He began as a chemist, dealing with what we may call the mechanics of chemistry; he became a biologist, at once denying most effectively the chemical origin of life and no less effectively demonstrating the commanding influence of life upon chemistry; and while showing forth as few others have ever done the almost incomprehensible wonders of

the material world, he was ever the most resolute and devout of believers in the spiritual world. There is no department of human philosophy which may not fittingly and gratefully pay tribute to his fame.

Unpleasant as it is, and regrettable as it is that it should ever have been made a subject of controversy, the question of the Allied war debts to America has been exploited and will doubtless irrepressibly continue to be debated for a long time to come. Probably historians centuries hence will devote much space to it and to discussing whether America should or should not have insisted upon payment. The most anomalous feature of it to-day is this, that some who insist that we entered the war through purely altruistic motives, for humanity's sake and to "make the world safe for democracy",—if the phrase has not been used *ad nauseam*,—are most insistent upon our collecting every cent, with interest; while some who maintain, as President Wilson did at the time, that we entered the war because of Germany's attacks and outrages upon us and her menace to us, are most in favor of cancelling the debts. Amid such incongruities, anyone is entitled to take any view that pleases him, without fear and without reproach.

There could scarcely be a more inappropriate time than this for a revival of religious bigotry, yet something unpleasantly like it appears to be mildly fermenting in the ecclesiastical world. Recently four somewhat prominent clergymen, connected with four leading Christian denominations, have been more or less severely taken to task by church authorities for alleged unsoundness in doctrine. A generation ago there would have been heresy hunts and ecclesiastical trials and excommunications. In the present cases there will probably be no such going to extremes, but the restraint will be due more to fear than to tolerance. One may well be at a loss to know which to regard with the greater wonder, that churches professing to stand upon the ground of the freedom of every man to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience should condemn the exercise of that freedom by their own clergy, or that men of intelligence,

independence and sincerity should wish to remain in organizations to whose more or less fundamental beliefs they cannot subscribe. Amid all the talk about realignment of political parties there seems to be at least equal occasion for a realignment of churches. If all the clergy and all the communicants should withdraw from the organizations in which they do not, in their hearts, believe, and enter those in which they do believe, or if necessary form new ones in accordance with their beliefs, the next religious census would show some considerable changes.

In not the largest aspect of his remarkable career, Lyman Abbott presented strong confirmation of the belief that even in a stern democracy there is "something in family blood". His father and two uncles were among the most prominent popular writers and teachers of their age, and he and his three brothers all rose to eminence. In a larger aspect he was a noteworthy exponent of popular culture in both intellectual and spiritual affairs, and of perhaps what is the most useful type of public teacher. He had in religion, ethics and sociology that fine gift which John Tyndall so highly developed in the stricter realm of science—of popularizing without vulgarizing or weakening the things which he had to teach. Few men so successfully pursued—without at all seeking it—the line of least resistance, or exerted so much guiding influence while incurring so little antagonism. He would never have compromised one iota of the faith that was in him for the sake of avoiding opposition or criticism; but through intuition, or inspiration, he found the course which not only seemed right to him but which also he was able to persuade others to regard as right.

Another noteworthy exemplar of puissant heredity was Thomas Nelson Page, whose name recalls more than half a dozen kinsmen of former generations who were of national consequence. From them he received not only his intellectual vigor and his robust Americanism, but also the distinction and charm of personality which made him one of the best loved writers of his time. He will be remembered, above all else, for three things: For his unsurpassed portrayal of the real life of the Old Dominion before

and during the Civil War; for his sane and convincing influence for both political and spiritual reunion of the nation; and for his singularly unpretentious but none the less invaluable services as a diplomat during and after the World War. It would be a sad day for American literature when *Marse Chan*, *Meh Lady* and *Unc' Edinburg's Drowndin'* were not esteemed as classics. It will be an auspicious day for American patriotism when his spirit of nationality rather than sectionalism universally prevails. There will be, we may trust, another instructive chapter added to the history of America in the World War when there is posthumously disclosed the story of his labors abroad for American interests and American honor, too often in spite of and in conflict with the Administration whose commission he bore.

Main Street has its seamy side as well as Broadway. That is the principal moral of the noisome New Jersey murder case which has for weeks commanded metropolitan and largely national interest. Its revelations have shown small city or town life to be marked with the same vices and crimes, the same sordidness and uncleanness, that rural folk are wont to charge against the largest cities. Perhaps we may add that they have shown a similarity between small place and large place in respect to the difficulty of detecting criminals and also to the fondness for exploitation of scandalous crimes. The police force of the largest city could not have blundered more or delayed more in apprehending a criminal than did the officers and detectives concerned in this case. City life, either fashionable or slum-contained, could have presented no more scandalous episodes than this. Nor would it have been easy for a double murder in the heart of the largest city to attract more attention or to hold it longer than this in a semi-rural community. Kipling's remark about "the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady" expresses a profound truth, applicable to all mankind. All are, in the last analysis, at least potentially alike.

Current statistics show that while on the one hand mortality from "natural causes", to wit, diseases, is steadily decreasing, that from "preventable causes", to wit, accidents and homi-

cides, is steadily and much more rapidly increasing. Thus deaths from highway accidents, chiefly with automobiles, are this year in the United States twenty-five per cent more numerous than last year, and will probably total 15,000 against 12,000 in 1921. It is a strange reflection that we can control tuberculosis more effectively than we can reckless driving. More people are killed by automobiles than by typhoid fever, or by diphtheria and croup, while if small pox killed one-tenth as many as do automobiles, there would be a nation-wide panic. But of course it is only another illustration of the supreme potency, for evil as well as for good, of the human will; and of the supreme difficulty of controlling it. Another phase of the same principle is suggested by the declaration of an eminent authority, Dr. Carpena, of the University of Madrid, repeated by many others, that criminals have the skulls of cave men, and are merely undeveloped in intellect. That is doubtless true in many cases, but it is doubtless untrue in many. If it were universally true, then all men of full cranial development would be moral and law-abiding; which unhappily we know not to be the case. The will to do evil exists in some of the greatest intellects, while some with only a rudimentary cerebral development are models of virtue and benevolence. Strive to dodge it as some may, the fact abides that the intellectual and moral faculties of man are distinct and separate, and the one need cultivation as much as the other, for the good of the individual and of society.